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SUBJECT: UK VIEWS ON WAY FORWARD ON THE SEPARATIST REGIONS
OF GEORGIA

REF: A. STATE 134559

[1](#)B. PALMER-EUR 01/09/2009 EMAIL AND UK NONPAPER
(NOTAL)

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Greg Berry for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. The UK seeks a strategy in regard to the separatist regions of Georgia that will maintain EU consensus but will also have substance, Michael Davenport, the Director of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) Russia, South Caucasus, and Central Asia Directorate, told the Political Minister Counselor January 9 during a discussion of U.S. strategies in regard to the separatist regions (Ref A). HMG wants to "maintain the focus" so that the Sarkozy-Medvedev agreement can be "implemented in full" by "keeping the spotlight on Russia," Davenport stressed. Although Davenport was cool to some specific points of the U.S. strategy, he agreed on the shared goal of finding a way "to not allow the status quo to become developed." Davenport expressed support for steps that will encourage the separatist areas to have "connections with the outside world" rather than encourage them to rely on Russia alone. He shared a copy of a British nonpaper, which the UK will table during Quad discussions January 12 in Berlin (provided to EUR per Ref B). Davenport advised that the UK supports renewal and possible strengthening of the UNOMIG mandate in February. He said the FCO has issued a stronger travel advisory in regard to the separatist regions. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The Political Minister Counselor met January 9 with Michael Davenport, Director of the FCO's Russia, South Caucasus, and Central Asia Directorate, to discuss the way forward on the separatist regions of Georgia, per Ref A. Davenport was cool regarding some points of the U.S. strategy; he stated that during January 12 Quad discussions in Berlin he would share a non-paper outlining HMG perspectives (Ref B). Polmincouns underscored the importance of strengthening Georgian institutions and not permitting the status quo in regard to the separatists' "independence" to become an entrenched, accepted reality.

Keeping the Spotlight on Russia

[1](#)3. (C) Davenport expressed support for these objectives, commenting that our shared goal is to find a way "to not allow the status quo to become developed," which he characterized as Russia's goal. He stated that the UK seeks a way forward that will maintain EU consensus but will have some substance. The UK has "looked at sanctions" on the separatist regions and has concluded that the most effective path is to take steps that will encourage the separatist areas to have "connections with the outside world" rather

than encourage them to rely on Russia alone. Davenport observed that he was mindful of the "not helpful precedents" of Belarus and Uzbekistan, stressing that the UK does not want to follow a path within the EU that would permit Russia to "exploit EU differences." Davenport stated that the UK's goal is to "maintain the focus" so that the Sarkozy-Medvedev agreement will be "implemented in full" and the way to do that is "to keep the spotlight on Russia." He predicted that the Czech and Swedish EU Presidencies would take a "robust line" with the Russians, which the UK welcomes.

The Importance of UNOMIG

14. (C) The UK "attaches a lot of importance" to UNOMIG renewal in February and UNOMIG is also valued by Abkhazia, as it provides the "only access to the outside world," Davenport said. Davenport stated that one option might be to let UNOMIG continue its mission but to concede changes to its name (for example, to a "UN Mission in Abkhazia, Georgia") so long as there are no concessions on the issues of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Any change would be coupled with greater access for UNOMIG, particularly in South Ossetia. (Note: Ref B outlines British thinking on possible ways ahead regarding UNOMIG, the OSCE Mission, and the EU Mission. End Note.)

Other Steps

15. (C) Davenport noted that the FCO has issued a ramped-up

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travel advisory, discouraging investment in and travel to the separatist regions -- and is encouraging other European countries to do the same. The UK also continues to encourage the Georgians to "think constructively" about engagement within the Geneva process -- and the FCO is encouraged "so far" by signs from the Georgians, Davenport said. He noted that Georgia's current NSC Secretary and former Foreign Minister Ekaterine Tkeshelashvili would be in the UK the week of January 12 to discuss crisis management. Davenport expressed appreciation for the excellent communication on the ground between the U.S. and UK Embassies in Georgia.

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